

The REFORMED JOURNAL

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Volume I — No. 1

A Periodical of Reformed Comment and Opinion

March 1, 1951

The Reformed Journal

WITH this first issue *The Reformed Journal* commends itself to the attention of the Reformed community.

This paper proposes to bring under study and to promote fruitful discussion of the many problems and interests which engage us as a Church. The need for this is quite apparent, we are sure. Fruitful community life and action needs the guidance and stimulus of an enlightened community mind. We do not find ready-made answers to the large questions which press upon us in the complex and crisis-ridden situation which confronts us in our day. The Church must find them and relate them to the concrete and moving aspects of our life. This means that the mind of the Church must be active, searching to know "what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

In publishing this journal we are moved by a sense of responsibility to contribute some part to the cultivation of our common mind. If we may thus serve, we shall be thankful. And while we give, we know we shall also gain. For we may trust that by the process of our thinking and writing, our own need for clarification will be served; and through such interchange as a moving fellowship affords, we shall learn as much as we may teach.

In speaking as we do of "the church," we do not think of ecclesiastical organization only, but of the body of those who are Christ's, in all their relations and in the wide compass of their life. Hence, *The Reformed Journal* will address itself not only to ecclesiastical matters, but as well to other things that belong to the scope of Christian life and thought.

We enter upon this writing venture with the assurance that comes from a body of convictions. It is our conviction

that the Holy Scriptures are the infallible and ultimate source of truth, in terms of which the Church must know herself and her calling, define and articulate her theology, interpret the world and its historical movement, and govern her life and practice. It is our conviction that in the Reformed tradition we have a vital heritage to which our thinking must be oriented, and in terms of which our thinking must grow and become more dynamic. And it is our conviction that there is amongst us, as members of the Church of Christ, a basic fellowship of faith, love, consecration, and purpose. This, in the Spirit, provides the best possible condition for that forthright and honest thought and expression which shall enable us to think and move together in the cause of God's truth. Hence, we shall write from a confidence that comes from being rooted in God's Word, from moving in the learning and light of the tradition of the Reformed faith, and from addressing ourselves to, while being a very part of, the communion of those who live in the Spirit and lay themselves under the mind of Christ.

The Reformed Journal makes its appearance with a resolve — and a pledge. It is the resolve that as servants of Christ and of His Church, we shall endeavor in all our writing to serve the Church and her communion. We shall try to avoid whatever moves in a narrow spirit to a narrow end, and which fails to serve the interests of our common life. We know we are but a part of the Church. As such we must give our life and thought and work for the Church. It is our resolve to write with the honesty, courage, and love that serves the well-being of the Church. This is also our pledge. May God bless this resolve, and help us to keep this pledge.

The Fraternity of the Press

THE REFORMED JOURNAL takes its place in the company of several already-existing and useful religious journals. Some are of denominational scope, some are addressed primarily to limited and local segments of the denomination, and others are of appeal beyond the boundaries of our denomination. Each fills a worthy place and serves a needful purpose in the life of our communion. The existence of several journals bespeaks the presence of a healthy ferment in the intellectual and spiritual life of a group — and at the same time helps to bestir and sustain it. How often have we not envied our Dutch brethren for the many journals amongst them which give so much vibrancy to the life of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands!

It will not seem strange, therefore, that a new paper comes to join itself to the company of those that now circulate amongst our Christian Reformed people. This new paper does so in the spirit of respect and appreciation for, and in the spirit of fraternity to, the journals by which we are now served. The publication of *The Reformed Journal* is not a venture in competition with, much less in criticism of, existing journals. It is, rather, in relation to them, an exercise in journalistic fraternity, — a sincere endeavor to help carry the burden of community need.

The particular concern of *The Reformed Journal* is to provide broad, thorough, and extended study and discussion of the basic interests and problems of our denominational life, and of the wider issues of Christian life and thought which are relevant to it. It is, therefore, a denominationally oriented paper; but one which is devoted more

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The Reformed Journal

VOLUME I NO. 1

A Periodical of Reformed Comment
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exclusively to dealing with idea and judgment, and one that would look out from as well as into the center of our denominational life. It does not propose to "cover the news," will carry no stories, will not endeavor by departmentalization to perform a variety of services. It aims to make particular appeal to the more thoughtful and responsible element in our Church constituency.

The conviction that this paper occupies a unique place in our community life, and that it is directed toward a distinct type of service, does not mean that it can stand aloof from its journalistic colleagues. *The Reformed Journal* will certainly be stimulated by, reflect upon, and enter into discussion with the other journals that serve our group.

We are certain that the editors of other papers expect and desire inter-journal discussion when the occasion recommends it or calls for it. It will be understood that such discussion will be one of the means through which the lively fellowship of the community mind will be fostered. We are of the same judgment, believing that inter-journal discussion will be salutary for all papers concerned and for the Church at large. That will most certainly be so if our discussions are objective, carried on with mutual confidence, with due regard to the proprieties and interests of Christian communion, and with sole reference to and honest evaluation of the issues involved.

The editors of *The Reformed Journal*, in recognition of the fraternity of the Christian press, pledge themselves to the observance of these considerations.

Editorial Notes

It is in order, at this point, to set forth the elements of the editorial policy by which *The Reformed Journal* is to be governed and shaped.

In terms of *subject matter*, we propose to deal with all that touches upon the thought and life of the Church. When we do so we hope to avoid abstract generalization on the one hand, and narrow provincialism on the other. There will, therefore, be some reference to and discussion of practice, event, and situation in our denominational life. This will give household character to the journal. But household matters, especially in the household of the Church, are also of universal interest. As a Church we belong to the universal Church; and as a family, we belong to the family of God in all the earth. The basic problems of our thought and life are those of the whole Christian Church. We shall discuss them in the focus of our own denominational experience, but we shall endeavor to do so in terms of the wider needs and interests of the whole Church of Christ.

There is also the matter of *manner of address*. We trust that the editors and contributors will write plainly, intelligibly, understandably. Journals are written to be read. The writer must try to meet the reader, in the confidence that the reader will also try to meet the writer. We shall, therefore, avoid the evil of pretentious rhetoric on the one hand, and the evil of patronizing simplicity on the other.

Furthermore, *The Reformed Journal* will be direct, explicit, forthright in its address. In matters of truth there is no

place for vagueness, equivocation, fear, compromise. There must be no hedging of issues. But neither must there be any indictment of persons. The fellowship in which we move gives opportunity and calls for the mutual exchange and criticism of ideas. Thus we educate and correct each other. The incrimination of persons destroys fellowship; it renders disservice instead of service. We are to judge all *things*, but always in the knowledge that He who judgeth us is the Lord.

The Reformed Journal will be written by its editors and contributors. The editors do not presume to be able to carry this burden alone. Nor are they ambitious to do so. They will assume responsibility for the management and direction of the paper as a whole. Meanwhile, they will solicit the aid of contributions from within the membership and ministry of the Church, and as well from others who are known to share our faith.

This does not mean that this journal is closed to those who are not solicited. To so enclose its pages would induce stuffiness, and perhaps strangulation and death. To the contrary, *The Reformed Journal* will be open to every wind of Reformed opinion. There will be space for "letters to the editors," — and full opportunity, on the condition that due proprieties are observed, for reader dissent, question, and criticism.

There are other editorial matters which can hardly be defined in terms of editorial policy, and yet have bearing on the character of the journal. Perhaps these come under what may be called editorial spirit.

Those who undertake to edit and publish a journal may seem presumptuous. We profess not to be. Though we speak we know that we are but one voice in the Church, — and the big voice to which we join our own is that of the Church. Though we write out of a call to leadership, we do so not so much that others may follow, but that we may all move forward together. And though we write to achieve an end, that end is only the service of the Church we love and in whose bosom our life is providentially fixed.

There is no need to say more. *The Reformed Journal* must henceforth speak for itself in the long-term expression that will come from its pages. It does not speak well, nor in such spirit and to such an end as is here professed, it will deserve not to be heard.

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lays no claim to reading and recognition. It waits only, in the measure in which its character, quality, and usefulness may warrant, to be claimed.

Autobiography

IT IS HARD to say just how far back one must look for the beginnings of this paper. For many years there has been felt the need of a paper that would provide full and substantial discussion of the many issues that confront us as a religious group. That need and the hope of its fulfillment have come to frequent expression, — sometimes in informal conversation, sometimes in more serious conference. About two years ago some of us came to the point of talking specific plans and procedures for the establishment of a new journal. All that was lacking then was definite organization and the clear resolution to take the hard step — and proceed.

The more exact beginning of this paper may be dated back to June 1950. It was then that the present editors committed themselves to the publication of this new journal and formally organized its editorial staff. In course of time the journal took on increasingly clear shape in our minds, an agreeable arrangement with the Wm. B. Eerdmans Company opened the way for its eventual publication, format and frequency of appearance were determined, and the same under which it should live and peak was chosen. This is the end of that process. Here, by reason above all of God's blessing, is the paper.

This may seem to be a bold undertaking. Maybe it is, but we scarcely feel that way about it. It seemed to us that we were getting far past the time to talk, and getting more than near the high time to act. There was that need that we felt along with others; there were convictions about that need that sounded more and more hollow in mere conversation; and there was the growing concurrence of favoring Providential circumstance. It came to be a time when continuing inertia would have been bolder than seemingly bold action. We chose to be no less bold. Here is the paper.

We who serve as Editors are not a school of thought, except as we have been schooled in the Reformed tradition. That is our common basic faith. That is our common basic commitment. It is quite possible that within that framework of our Reformed tradition

Self-Examination Expanded

by JAMES DAANE

FOUR TIMES each year our church calls upon every confessing member to practice self-examination before celebrating Holy Communion. The Church herself initiates this process of self-criticism by conducting preparatory services the preceding Sunday. On this Sunday, she exhorts each member to bring all his critical faculties into play and to focus them upon himself. He must see himself in the light of God. This self-criticism is esteemed by the Church as a necessary exercise, one in which each member should be painstakingly faithful.

The Church insists on this self-criticism not that each confessing member may discover whether or not he is really a Christian — though this may also happen. The reason is rather that the Christian *as a Christian* should place himself under the light of God to have his sins and weakness brought to view. Only when the Christian comes to see himself as both "Christian" and "unworthy," can he be a worthy partaker of the Holy Supper.

Because the Christian is an unworthy sinner, and the norm of criticism is the Word of God, the whole exercise of self-criticism is bound to be painful. Yet this must not deter him. The pain of the pricked pride and the humbled self is the travail of salvation. When rightly done under the glaring light of the judging Word of God, this self-criticism results in a self-appraisal in which he abhors himself and humbles himself before God. Though the criticism be painful, he must abhor *himself*, not the

criticism. All personal criticism hurts, and most of all that criticism of the self which coincides with the biblical criticism of the self. Yet he must not draw back because of the hurt. It is the pain of salvation. And so long as the Christian is in this world, he must be willing to stand under the judgment of the Bible. Without these wounds of salvation, he cannot go from strength to strength and appear at last before God in Zion.

This principle of self-criticism is not a quaint custom or a formal exercise that we as a church can afford to forget or neglect. It is nothing less than an application of one of the fundamental principles of the Protestant Reformation.

The task of bringing the criticism of the Bible upon *everything*, is the broad principle that embodies the true spirit of the Reformation. The spirit of the Reformation is the insistence that every man, Christian or non-Christian, every work — good or bad; every institution — whether Church or State, social or political, stands under the critical judgment of God's Word. No Church is so sacred, no Creed so true, no Christian so good, no political or social order so Christian, as to be exempt. An individual or institution that claims exemption has lost the spirit of the Reformation.

This means, on the one hand, that it is the duty of the Church not merely to bring each member under the judgment of the Divine Word. It means also that the Church must bring every human institution, social, political, economical, cultural, under the criticism and judgment of the Bible. No matter how pagan or Christianized, the Church, with Bible in hand, must stand as judge over every human social institution. Stated negatively: no matter how Christianized a given social order may be, the Church may never comfortably identify herself with it. When the Church identifies herself with any social-political order and pronounces only blessing upon it, the Church is conforming herself to the world. Such behavior on the part of the Church is worldliness on the level of the church. The long way of Church History is lit-

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certain differences may appear. If they should, what could be better than that they should come to full expression before the Church! That would be a great gain, resulting as it would in giving sharper insights into and greatly enriching our common understanding of the faith we profess and try to live.

And so we start. Here is the paper. May God bless it, and through it bless us and all whom it is intended to serve.

Harry R. Boer
James Daane
George Stob
Henry Stob
Henry Zylstra

SELF-EXAMINATION EXPANDED

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tered with the wrecks of Churches which comfortably identified themselves with a given social or political order. They stand as monuments of God's judgment against churches that recognized and honored "good works" on the social-political level. When the Church ceases to judge all men and all their works, God judges the Church.

ON the other hand, this critical principle of true Protestantism demands that the Church too should engage in self-examination. The Church must not only insist that the individual member be willing to be judged by God's Word. The Church herself, *as Church*, must be willing to stand under the critical judgment of God's Word. The Church must always resist the temptation to claim exemption. She too must examine herself. She must ever stand under the judgment of Scripture, submit to its judgment, and be willing to make amends. The Bible, of course, always judges the Church. But the Church herself must actively assess herself in the light of the Bible. Thus the Church confesses her sins as Church, declares that her faith is not rooted in her own "good works," and keeps herself open to salvation by grace.

Frequently the Church has been unwilling to stand under the criticism of God's Word. The Church of Jesus' own day was stung by the critical judgments made against her by the Word that became flesh. The Pharisees hated Jesus heartily for driving the shafts of his criticism into their institutionalized religion. They hated Him for disturbing the peace of the church and upsetting the religious applecart. The Pharisees thought that their institutionalized religion and their codification of the Law was quite above reproach. Their Church was quite all right. It should not be subjected to criticism—even by the Lord. It surely was not good for the Church that Jesus should publicly criticize her religious leaders! It surely was not the part of wisdom to unsettle the faith of the common people in their church and her leaders! Christ was an anarchist when he ventured to criticize their body of law, to modify their idea of the Sabbath, to cleanse their temple!

The Pharisees and the priestly caste—the ministers and leaders of the Church

of Jesus' day—desired to keep the *status quo*. Nothing should be criticized; nothing should be changed. The whole religious structure built by them required no special alteration and hence could tolerate no special criticism. The Church was not on the way to sanctification; she had already arrived. This attitude of the church leaders of Jesus' day was simply a belief in "work righteousness" on the institutional level. And when our Lord insisted on the need of self-examination, not only for individuals, but for the Church as Church, he became in the eyes of the Church the great "troubler of Israel." Rather than keep themselves open to the criticism of the Divine Word, the Jewish leaders silenced the Word by building a Cross.

Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church could not tolerate this true biblical spirit of the Reformation. Rome will not concede that her Church, her dogma, her papal pronouncements, must always be subject to the criticism of Scripture and to the revision demanded by it. Rome shows her kinship to Phariseism by insisting that her historical, institutionalized, teaching Church is holy, and is therefore exempt from Scriptural criticism. Rome insists that when her greatest church leader speaks on matters of faith and morals, his word cannot be challenged even by the man with Bible in hand. Rome teaches that her dogma and creeds are so completely identified with God's truth that they cannot be altered even by Biblical demand. If one should criticize Rome, even with Bible in hand, his name is anathema.

AGAINST this identification of the Church with God's truth—which inevitably ends with the Church's claim to lordship over God's truth—the Reformers raised vehement protest. They set themselves against "work righteousness" on the institutional as well as on the individual level. The Reformers were aware of the evil of a Church that believed *in herself*. They knew that a Church can have a spirit of self-pride and self-esteem that closes her eyes to her own need of sanctification. Hence, they insisted that the Church, as well as its individual members, must always examine herself in the light of Scripture, and conform her life to the demands of Scripture.

It is well that we as a Church believe in individual self-examination, and that we periodically exhort our members to a special exercise of it. We must also

believe with equal fervor in the need of its broad application to all of life. As a Reformation Church we must engage in self-examination on a denominational scale, and be concerned that our Church, our dogmas, our creeds, our ecclesiastical policies shall always be subjected to the test of Scripture.

Perhaps we are not as much aware of the need of denominational self-examination, nor as willing to engage in it as we ought to be. We are, of course, always in danger of thinking of the Church as a collection of individual members. But the Church is more than the sum-total of its individual members. The Church is one organic whole. For that reason the Church as a whole must constantly examine herself, and not only her individual members. On this score the Church is called to bring the judgment of Scripture to bear on all our social, political and economic orders. These all touch upon the life of the Church. And it is our calling as a Church to put no confidence in the flesh, and to trust in no human creation, whether it be Capitalism or Socialism or Communism, whether Democracy or Totalitarianism. One is indeed better than another—but none is good enough to be exempt from the judgment of Scripture. Therefore, those who direct biblically grounded criticism against these orders and the Church's relation to them, live in the very spirit of the Church which lay herself under the sovereign Lordship of the Word.

The same need of self-examination holds with reference to the Church herself. Sometimes, to be sure, we are tempted to think that what was good enough for our fathers is good enough for us. Our fathers, if they should find us thinking so, would feel that we were betraying a trust. For those who live in the luxury of complacency and set themselves against any change deny the very Reformation principle which our fathers handed down to us.

Sometimes we say too roundly and with too much ease that there is nothing wrong with the Christian Reformation Church. Oh, yes, she could be more spiritual—what Church could not be more spiritual! But there is nothing particularly wrong with the Church—nothing that requires any particular corrective action. Maybe that is right. Maybe there is nothing wrong with the Church. But the spirit that so confidently and uncritically says so is surely wrong. And when we are gov-

erned by that spirit we are in danger of brushing aside criticism without giving it thoughtful consideration, and in danger of believing that all of our Church life is so right as to need no correction. This is fatal to the Scriptural principle that not only the holiest men, but even the holiest churches, "have only a small beginning of this obedience" demanded by God's Word.

It is part of the unhappy record of Church History that the Church has never taken too kindly to criticism of herself. It is remarkable that, even against the Word of God, the Church's first natural reaction is one of defense. There have been instances in which responsible leaders have feared rather than welcomed new light from the Bible. Even when the Church gives herself to serious study of a given issue, some are tempted to hope that no Biblical evidence will be found that will overthrow a cherished and long-held position. The embarrassment at having an argument met or a position overthrown by Biblical evidence is understandable — for we are human. But that embarrassment has no right to consideration or standing — for we are Christ's.

ALL self-examination whether on the individual or church level is bound to be painful. Yet we must insist on its exercise on both levels. The Word of God possesses this lordship, as well over our denominational, as over our individual lives. In a sense the Reformation principle of self-examination in the light of Scripture ought to be applied even more fervently on the denominational level. It is so easy to lose oneself in the group, and to lose sight of one's sins and defects as a member of a group. What we do as a group is more difficult to appraise than that which we do as individuals. We must, therefore, make the membership of our churches aware of the necessity of this broader application of the Reformation principle. We must all learn to be critical of every human achievement in the social-political realm. But since judgment must always begin in the house of God, we must become increasingly ready to bring the critical judgment of the Word upon our Church, her practices, creeds, policies and achievements. Only thus shall we grow in grace and be pleasing to God.

If we evade this exercise because we are afraid of change, then we are again

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The New Orient and Missions

by HARRY R. BOER

SPEAKING at the end of the recent British Commonwealth of Nations meeting at London, Prime Minister Nehru of India spoke words that must be taken seriously not only by the western nations as political, economic, and military entities. But no less must the western Church as a missionary sending agency and as part of the universal Church take note.

Mr. Nehru said, "The old equilibrium has been upset and can never come back again . . . That is the basic fact to remember." Asia is emerging from colonial status and is therefore "no longer prepared to tolerate any domination, or any behavior after the old pattern of colonialism."

These words, spoken by a leader of millions of Asiatics, are not the words of a boastful man or of one drunk with a new-found power; they are responsibly spoken words, and they testify to a sober objective fact. To ignore them would be a great mistake. The domination of the Orient by the Occident which began early in the seventeenth century is now at an end. Where white domination still exists it exists as a remnant of an order that is either past or is bound to disappear before the irresistible flood of nationalism and the striving after independence. We may deeply deplore the manner in which the exit of the West is sometimes forced, as in Indonesia, but it is hardly conceivable that another handling of the matter there would materially have altered the ultimate course of development.

The new situation makes necessary a basic reorientation of our attitude to the Orient. For three and one half centuries the West has entertained toward the multitudes in the East a feeling of superiority and in its nobler relations with them has expressed this feeling in a paternalism that found expression in many ways. The paternalism always implied, however, the right of final decision. It was an outgrowth of enlightened "Europeanism," the sense that Europe was the center of the Universe. This feeling, especially in matters of religion, is far from extinct. It grows out of the Western world's pride in the tremendous progress she has made in the arts of civilization.

No one who is somewhat acquainted with the history of the missionary enterprise of the Church will be able to deny that Christ's white ambassadors have all too frequently allowed this sense of cultural, scientific, and other superiority to influence their spiritual labors amongst foreign peoples. Missionaries are, after all, Germans, British, Dutch, Americans, etc., and as such cannot easily escape the influences of their national and cultural environment. As a result the younger churches in the Orient, in Africa and elsewhere have been governed largely by the whites who founded them. This was to an extent unavoidable, and the statement of the fact is not necessarily to be construed as a criticism. Often no other course was or seemed at the time possible. Criticism becomes legitimate in those many instances where authority might have been relinquished but was tenaciously retained.

Now missionaries and the churches stand before the new Orient as defined by Mr. Nehru. It is not to be supposed that the sense of power, independence, and self-determination now so characteristic of the Orient is not going to be felt in the membership of the Church in oriental lands. Just as missionaries could hardly be other than German, British, Dutch or American, *as missionaries*, so the Christians in the Orient can hardly be expected to be other than Indian, Chinese, Japanese or Indonesian, *as church members*. It is to be hoped they will be that more charitably, more discerningly than non-Christians. But they will be that. Most American churches have an American flag at the pulpit. Whether that is right is another matter. The fact is that it is there and we must not suppose that there will not be flags, literally or figuratively, in the churches of the Orient. The new-found sense of freedom will not stop at political boundaries. It will carry and already has carried over into the life of the Church. This is a major factor for missionary statesmanship to reckon with. To ignore it or to take it lightly is to invite frustration at every point of endeavor.

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THE NEW ORIENT AND MISSIONS

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Mission work in some areas will from now on be the official responsibility of the younger churches. The support and help of the churches in the West are still much desired but executive decisions with respect to mission work will be made locally. The missionaries can help and advise — and here a scope of service of no small extent presents itself — but the missionaries will be responsible as regards their labors to the governing bodies of the churches on the field. Delicate problems of dual loyalty will doubtless arise, since the missionary is a minister in or sent out by a church in the West. That is all part of the difficulty involved in the present transition.

In such a situation the missionary will be called on to exercise the greatest tact and wisdom, to realize that he is as much on a level with his oriental brother ministers (or teachers or nurses) as he is at home with his colleagues, and to perform his services in the spirit of mutuality and equality which the new situation requires. This will not be easy. It will be necessary for the missionary to divest himself of all feeling of white superiority, and of claim to greater authority which his perhaps more extended education might at times seem to warrant.

In one of his books Roland Allen says that we have done nearly everything for the younger Christians and churches — we have preached to them, we have taught them, we have administered the sacraments, we have nursed them, cherished them, healed their diseases, educated them, treated them as dear children—we have done everything for them except one thing: we have not treated them, in the full sense of the word, as *brethren*. Now the time has come to do that, with all that the word "brother" implies in equality of worth, position, and authority. Harsh events have made it easier for us to listen to the Scriptures of the New Testament teaching us that the Church, no matter where she is, *is of age* because the poured out Spirit of Pentecost dwells in all her members and has made them *fellow laborers* with Christ and for his truth.

On the Call for Leadership

by HENRY STOB

A FEATURE of the times is the call for leadership that is heard on every side. The citizen is calling for leadership in the affairs of state, the parent is calling for it in the schools, and the believer is calling for it in the church.

The mere fact that the call is issued is not in itself a commentary on the uniqueness of the times. The call has been issued before. The demand for leadership is perennial. Our fathers called for it in their generation, and our children will call for it in theirs. This is because genuine leadership is hard to come by, and therefore rare, and because new times always require new instances of it. Being the thing it is, no one is likely at any time to think there is enough of it. The call for it will therefore continue to be made so long as time goes on.

Of course, the call for leadership is not equally urgent in every age. Sometimes the call is extraordinarily loud and insistent. Ours seems to be such a time. There is a widespread feeling that in certain important areas of our corporate life, in politics for example, leadership is either entirely lacking or dangerously misdirected. In other areas, such as education, it is held to be either confused or wanting in vigor and militancy. And because such a state of affairs is rightly held to be intolerable, the call for leadership goes out.

It goes out not only in the state and school, but also in the church. Our people have been heard to issue such a call. You and I have joined them on occasion. It is true, our call was much less critical than plaintive. But the point is that we called. We felt, no doubt, and still feel, that since there are exceptionally great dangers threatening us today, and since there are exceptionally important goals to be achieved before our opportunities run out, the need for wise and vigorous leadership is at present exceptionally acute. And so we called.

For this we deserve no blame, but praise — provided, that is, that we understood what it was we were calling for. The fact is that people who call for leadership are by no means agreed as to what it is they want; and I suggest that you and I owe it to ourselves and to

our God to inquire what it is we understand by leadership before we issue our call again.

THE Christian when he calls for leadership certainly does not wish to be understood as calling for dictatorship. He wants to be led, but it is not in chains that he wants to be led. He wants no halter on his neck, no blinkers on his mind, no muzzle on his mouth. He wants no leadership by constraint and fear, none that lies beyond the reach of his criticism and amendment. He does not want this because he is a man, and because as a man he stands upon his dignity. He does not want this because he is a Christian, and because as a Christian he cannot put his heart in pawn to any man.

The fact is that the dictator has no rightful place anywhere, least of all in the Christian community. He has no place there not merely because considerations of comfort and self-esteem rule him out, but because Christianity itself has no place in its scheme for such a man. The Christian community is a committed community. It is made up of men and women who have surrendered their wills to Christ, and have no will remaining to yield to any other. They have their Master, and can own no other. They must therefore proclaim their freedom and independence from any man who would lay an absolute claim upon their allegiance. They cannot recognize among their fellows any lords and masters. It is an axiom to them that no man or group of men may be allowed to tyrannize Christ's body.

When the Christian calls for leadership, therefore, he does not want a Hitler to respond, nor a Mussolini or a Stalin, nor indeed a Pope. He is not asking for a Führer. A Führer is a man whose will supplants and negates our own. To acknowledge him is to empty ourselves of our humanity. But more than that, it is to forget that our wills are already captive to the Lord.

The only leader a Christian can acknowledge is one who recognizes that Christians, by virtue of their Christianity, have a momentum and direction of their own, and are unwilling to be deflected from their course. The only

leader a Christian can follow in the deepest things of life is one who travels with him in the Way. In important things the Christian will defer to no man who does not stand committed with him to a common Master, who does not kneel as low as he before a common Maker. When we Christians ask for leadership, therefore, we are asking first of all for a fellow servant of the Christ, and then, since all are one in Christ, for a man who on that account is sensitive to the massive and historic will of the Christian community he leads. We are asking, too, for one who is not above consulting us as brothers in one communion, who recognizes and respects the range of private judgment, and who is always prepared to submit his thoughts and programs for our scrutiny and critical evaluation.

WE do not want a leader who imposes his will upon us from without. But neither do we want a leader who recognizes no will but our own. We do not want a leader who tyrannizes over us. But neither do we want a leader who is merely concerned to obey us.

This may appear obvious, yet in practice the call for leadership is often nothing more than the call for obedience and submission. People choose a political leader and then demand of him that he do nothing but reflect the variegated and often conflicting opinions and interests of his constituency. They ask that he be in all particulars subservient to their wishes, that he entertain and express no ideas they do not fully share, that he be a kind of puppet who has no mind and will that can be called his own. The call for such a man is not a call for a leader, but for a follower.

When we call for leadership in church and school it is surely not for this we call. We are not asking, when we ask for leaders, for men concerned only to confirm us in our prejudices. Perhaps a teacher does not share your racial attitudes. You may like to discuss the matter with him, but you do not question his leadership on that account alone. It is not the function of a leader to find new and better grounds for the private or provincial views we hold. His function is to discover the truth, and in the process he may well uncover grounds for discrediting our views. It will not do for us to call for leadership and then demand that our leaders merely echo

our own frequently untutored sentiments. No man is our leader if, merely in deference to us, he reinforces the status quo, avoids saying anything that may discomfit us, or leaves us in undisturbed possession of our sinful smugness.

The leader we want is one who represents not our narrower but our bigger self. We want one who, because he is united with us in Christ, knows the elemental impulses of our heart, and who dares, in order to give them scope, to disabuse us of whatever obstructs their wholesome exercise. We want a man who has the courage to shift at some points our wonted perspectives. We want a man who will voice our ideals and not our actualities, who will represent our better self and not our worse. We want, in short, a man who knows better than ourselves what we should want, who will exhibit for us the implications of our most basic faith, who will lead us by the bright attractiveness of the high goals he delineates away from our merely common and familiar attachments. And we want a man who will not hesitate in the process to burst the bubbles of our pride and to reveal the emptiness of our conventional formulas and clichés. With such a man we can go forward.

IT may be said then that when we call for leadership what we want is neither a Dictator nor a Follower. The former stands superior and detached, and in his detachment cannot win our inner confidence and loyalty. The latter sinks

into subservience and on that account can effect no improvement. When we call for leadership what we want is men who are able so far to draw us to a point beyond the one we now occupy, and yet never loose their grip upon our hand or their hold upon our heart.

A leader is no leader unless, turning his back upon the actual, he strikes out for and delineates the ideal. He is no leader unless he has courage to move into uncharted paths and venture into unmapped areas. He is no leader unless he is in the van, in advance of those who have called him and singled him out for leadership. To deny this, to deny a leader the privilege of having visions, to deny him the right to criticize the status quo, to insist that he do nothing and say nothing that has not always been said and done, is not to have a leader, but at best a propagandist, and is not to advance but to stultify.

On the other hand a leader is no leader if he does not remain in the closest possible touch with those it is his privilege to guide. He must share their deepest convictions, stand with them within the framework of their most basic commitments. That means, if he is to be a leader of the Christian community, that he must stand with all who look to him for guidance upon the single foundation of the Christ. If he is to lead, and not mislead, he must tie himself to God, and to the sense of God that resides in the spirit filled community of Christ. From this he may never wander; it is only in this that he may advance.

We will get the kind of leadership we are worthy of, the kind of leadership we are willing to pay the price for. The call for leadership, when we issue it, is a call and challenge to a man bigger and better than ourselves, but it also lays upon us an obligation to recognize him when he appears. The sign of him will be that he will not always leave us in our comfortable conceits. But if we are wise we will look more closely before we take offense at him. We will look to discover whether he speaks not in his own name, but in that of his Master and our own. We will seek to discover in what he says the accents of the Lord. And when we discover it we will follow him in the growing realization that it is not really this man we follow but Him who is the Way.

THE EDITORS

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"Interests" and Education

by HENRY ZYLSTRA

A NUMBER of ill-considered ideas about education threaten sometimes to filter into our Reformed community. One such idea that we should take pains to counteract is the idea that school is a place to coddle people's interests.

Interest is most certainly a condition of learning. Interesting subject matter, the interesting presentation of it, and an interested student — these are the very culture, perhaps the only culture, in which education can thrive. Even so, however, in speaking of interesting subject matter, we should distinguish between a natural and a disciplined interest. We like the colored comics until we discover the *Reader's Digest*, and the *Reader's Digest* until we earn our way into *Harper's*. This represents a kind of progression from a natural to a disciplined interest, and "interesting subject matter" is therefore not entirely an instinctive affair. All the same, interest is a condition of learning, love a condition of insight. It makes sense, therefore, to take some account in our schools of the individually differing interests of students.

But there is a point at which this idea of "interests" invites anarchy. It is getting so now, for instance, that some high schools and colleges advocate paying no mind at all to what a student takes, and in combination with what else he takes it, provided only that he takes something, and does well in it. This, in educators' phrase, is called "ignoring content and pattern" of courses, and "stressing achievement." Just what alien principle this notion is an expression of, I cannot say, though it seems to blend well with that other modern excrescence, the doctrine of "pupil-centered education," and with its corollary, "the elective system." All three of these ideas seem to me the last infirmity of naturalism. Reality being so very bewildering — such the underlying dogma — maybe we can get somewhere by identifying it with its victims, and studying them. I say again that this extravagant preoccupation with interests should not occur where the Christian idea of man and his education is operative.

I feel keenly about this again just now, fresh as I am from a tour of professional duty at assisting students in their registering at college. We have a

green book there, called College Catalogue, in which there is a tabular listing of the courses offered. In the front end of this book there is also some advice about what the students ought to study, and in what order, and in what combination with other subjects. This advice is a distillation of traditional sense, and has been mediated through a good many educators' minds. It outlines a considerable range of possibilities, makes allowance for individual differences, is flexible, and undergoes revision when new occasions teach new duties. All the same, there is insistence in it on "content and pattern" of courses. So far, indeed, from being mere advice, it lays down the conditions for graduation.

MANY a student, when he comes to register, chafes under the restrictions of a prescribed course of that kind. He has his eye on the second half of the Catalogue, that is, on the offerings. He pores over it like a kid at the confectioner's with a nickle to spend, pointing to the delicacies he's been pining for. He wants some of this, a little of that, and, look, could he have a couple of those? When he encounters resistance (because I am sitting there) he looks at me as if to ask whether this is not a free country. This, then, is an instance of someone who looks upon school as a place to have his "interests" tickled.

Many a student too, be it said, comes well-girded, and seems of his own volition, and not perforce, to select a content and order of courses such as the most veteran counsellor would recommend. There is also the occasional one who makes out a program of studies that is surprising in its quality. I recall one such a year ago. It was a model performance, heartening to any teacher with some Reformed sense in his system. I looked at the name — it was not Dutch. The man had "fundamentalist" antecedents.

There are, however, those too many others. Fresh from high school, hardly emerging from a semester at college, the "natural science" and "foreign language" limping in on a "D" or an "E," they are eager, now that they have "worked off some requirements," to get

at their "interests." "I made a little schedule," says the girl, and there it is, crumpled in the purse:

Music Appreciation
Story Telling
Interpretative Reading
Art
Contemporary Poetry

Clearly that will not do. There is off course no objection to any one subject as such. There is nothing wrong with Music Appreciation. Music has always been expressive of spiritual man, and the appreciation, form, and history of it are as good a way as any to reach through to that moral education which turns out in the end to be the purpose of life. Story Telling, too, the art of story, was fundamentally significant well before Moses could say of life that we spend it as a tale that is told. Interpretative Reading, the art of expression, is that discipline which, in well-regulated schools and lives, goes inseparably paired with the spiritual reason. So Shakespeare: "Sure, He that made us with such large discourse, / Looking before and after, gave us not / That capability and god-like reason / To fust in us unused." Music, story, speech, and those others, laid in God's reality for discovery, use, and praise, belong in the curriculum. But what bothers me in my student is that her "little schedule" is top-heavy on the aesthetic side, and that it provides little opportunity for historical discipline. I fear, too, that she looks upon herself as a creature mainly organic, and full of sensibilities which she now wants coddled, entertained, and at best "refined." This is nice, but is it moral education?

The student is not so much, not solely, to be blamed for a still disordered and immature sense of what man is, what life is, and what education is. What I wish for on such occasions is a more generally active idea of Christian education in the community as a whole, an idea going out from the center to the periphery, from the periphery to the center, and involving everybody — teacher, minister, board member, pupil, and people. We have such a fine chance for maintaining the spiritual dignity of man and his education by way of nature, culture, and history. There is the first question and the first answer of John Calvin's *Genevan Catechism* to challenge us: What is the chief end of man? To know God and enjoy him forever. The thrust of that, when we come to reflect

upon it, is that man is spiritual and moral, not merely natural and organic. There is also the counsel of the Ecclesiast: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That makes education dogmatic; it does not make education unnecessary.

WE shall insist then on "content and pattern." Our object is morality, not efficiency. We want character more than calibre. We have no objection to the term "development" as an aim in education, provided it means moral development, and not merely a refinement of crude sensibility, or a better organization of impulses and instincts. We are not so bewildered by reality as to find ourselves adrift on the stream of nature. We cherish "personality" because of its "interests," yes, but even more because these lead us to the moral decision of spiritual freedom. Hence we shall want content, want to be disciplined by reality as it is. That reality must be representative reality. The curriculum will therefore include nature, culture, and history. And it will provide historical discipline. Else there will be no opportunity of showing that man in his life chooses for God or against him, and that this choice is the significance of life.

That takes me back to the solid advice at the front end of the Catalogue. I explain to the girl, and give her the usual:

Bible
Biology
Latin
Grammar, Rhetoric, Composition
History.

"Okay?" I ask.

"Okay!" she says. These students are susceptible to ideas.

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The Reformed Journal



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Thoughts on Synodical Procedure

by HARRY R. BOER

WITH respect to many important questions confronting the denomination, Synod speaks the final and authoritative word. The finality of its decisions is limited only by the action of subsequent Synods. Because these decisions are very important for the Church, often for years to come, they should come out of the fullest and most careful thought and study.

In this connection it may be said that there is no adequate substitute for thoughtful preparation on the part of the individual delegate. Delegates will have a large part, by voice and vote, in the making of these decisions. For that reason each individual delegate will want to be so prepared as to be able to give the best that is in him.

As you know, much of the hardest and most crucial work of Synod is done in Committees of Pre-Advice. On the first day of the synodical meeting all the business on the agenda is divided among six or seven Committees of Pre-Advice. These Pre-Advisory Committees are appointed by a Committee on Committees, which is in turn appointed by the newly elected officers. It is the task of the Committees on Pre-Advice to hear and weigh the pros and cons on all issues assigned to them for study, to formulate judgments on these issues, and then present their findings to the entire synodical meeting for consideration and disposition.

Although every member of Synod is not only entitled to but is supposed to have his own opinions on all matters, it is evident that the collective recommendation of a committee which has made special study of a particular issue is not to be lightly regarded. The recommendations of the Committees of Pre-Advice are by no means always accepted, but it is clear that the point of view advocated by these Committees has a definite edge over any other. Therefore their recommendations should be as mature, as well thought out, and as carefully formulated as possible. Such careful preparation saves the Synod time, clarifies the issues, and in the end makes wiser and more enduring decisions possible.

In our present set-up it would seem that the individual delegate comes to

his work at Synod at something of a disadvantage. He does not know on what Committee he will serve until after Synod is convened. From the time of his election at the Winter Classis, until the day after Synod has begun its meetings, the individual delegate can prepare himself to take part in the discussions only in the most general manner. General study of the Agenda is, of course, not without value. But the fact is that it alone can never lead to well-defined opinions on particular matters. It is probably no uncommon occurrence at any Synod that delegates in greater or less number go to their committee meetings to *discover* rather than to *contribute* initial viewpoints, ideas, and opinions. The result may well be that what comes out of the committee is more the viewpoint of one or two individuals who have background in the problem and to whom the less well-informed look for leadership, than it is the well-matured thought of a group of individuals who have presented to one another their several insights and have at last crystallized a common viewpoint.

Is the present method of appointing Committees of Pre-Advice the only one that can exist within the framework of Synodical procedure? It would not seem so. A solution to the above outlined difficulty that has occurred to some and is here submitted for the consideration of the Church is both simple, and, unless we are mistaken, workable. It is that a responsible official body, such as the Synodical Committee or the officers of the preceding Synod, meet as soon as the Stated Clerk of Synod has received from the several Classes the names of the delegates, and from them appoint the membership of the Committees of Pre-Advice for the forthcoming Synod. These would not meet as committees until the convening of Synod, but every member would know in what specific field of Synodical activity he would be expected to take a major part. His specific preparation to contribute to the deliberations of the committee of which he is a member and of the assembly as a whole would be limited only by his time and interest. Not only could the Agenda be more purposefully studied, but the history of the

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THOUGHTS ON SYNODICAL PROCEDURE

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problems at hand could be gone into, their merits canvassed, and pointed and relevant discussions could take place at home in the weeks preceding Synod. We believe that under such a procedure more mature and better qualified opinion would be gathered at the committee tables and that more mature and better qualified recommendations would issue from the committee room to the floor of Synod.

A plan from which the one above suggested varies only in detail was submitted to the 1950 Synod of the Reformed Church in America. It reads as follows:

In order to increase the efficiency of our Synod your Committee would recommend that Synod advise the Classes to appoint their delegates to General Synod at their Fall Sessions and forward their nominations without delay; that the President of Synod then appoint the various committees as soon as possible; and that all materials to be acted on by the various committees be sent to the members of the committees as soon as they are available so that the members of committees may give careful consideration to them before they come to Synod. (Quoted from *Church Herald*, June 9, 1950)

What action was taken on this proposal the Synodical report from which the above was taken did not say.

Some disadvantages to the plan may be pointed out, but they do not seem to be major ones. Some of the members appointed to committees would have to leave their committee work to become officers of Synod. In the second place, some members may become so preoccupied with matters before their particular committees that other matters may not receive the attention and study they deserve. It is more than likely, however, that any loss on this score would be more than made up for by the gain of more careful preparation for dealing with particular problems.

Harry R. Boer

★ After the above article was written, word was received that Classis Holland is overturing Synod to effect a change in procedure along the lines here suggested. We trust the overture will receive Synod's careful consideration.

H. R. B.

Liberalism and Dogma

by HENRY ZYLSTRA

Dogma is a word that is falling into disuse among us. It is kept alive in our language mainly by the liberals. To them it stands for the worst of bad things. Liberalism thrives on its opposition to dogma. Take dogma out of the world and the liberal collapses for want of anything to be or to do. His whole case is the case against dogma. Hence he sees to it that we hear a lot about the Nazi dogma, the Communist dogma, the Catholic dogma, and the fundamental Christian dogma. He sees to it also that we hear little about the liberal dogma for that he maintains is a contradiction in terms. So he keeps using the word, loading it with bad meaning.

I have an instance of it before me as I write, and it nettles me into reaction. It comes from the inside flap of a book-jacket:

"In an age of dogma, controversy, and persecution, Browne had voiced one of the first great pleas for religious tolerance."

That is a typical piece of liberal dogma. Consider it. "In an age": that age is the past, of course, an age now well behind us, thanks to liberalism and Browne's share in it. "An age of dogma, controversy, and persecution": where you have the one, you have the others — if dogma, then persecution, and then also a passionate hickering about things that cannot be proved. "Browne . . . voiced one of the first great pleas for religious tolerance": as always, so here, religious tolerance is assumed to be a liberal accomplishment. As a matter of fact, religious tolerance comes precisely from dogma, conviction, and principle. Its basis is the conviction that religious allegiance is the most precious of man's properly spiritual freedoms. Behind the tolerance lies a faith and a principle, not a critical temper or a skeptical philosophy.

Christians, no doubt, nominal and real, have contributed their unfortunate part to the disrepute of dogma. Because religion is radical, conviction is liable to danger. When it is wedded to bigotry, it gives ground to the liberal protest. Even so the bigotry is not to be identified with dogma. There have indeed been historical periods of inqui-

sition, persecution, and intimidation, all three conducted sometimes in the name of dogma. But the solution cannot be reactionary liberalism. The solution cannot be: no dogma. The issue is not dogma or no dogma. The issue is: What dogma? Being human, we cannot abandon principle, live without it. We must choose for God and the governing principle, the determinative dogma. That is the way to religious tolerance. That is the way to religious freedom, and every freedom properly moral.

The noun *dogma*, then, owing mainly to the liberal protest, is in disrepute. So is the adjective *dogmatic*. We have yielded it to the enemy, have followed in the wake of the popular usage. The word is now a term of opprobrium. It stands for a mentality that is as blind as a mole in its wrong-headed bias. We bring it out, steeped in vitriol, when we tire of arguing. We say, "He is dogmatic," and so condemn without trial. We fetch the word down from the liberal's line, where it stands alongside of those others: communist, fascist, authoritarian, dogmatic. This is a regrettable decay of meaning, and something like a fall from grace.

The point is that dogma is inevitable. It is belief, religion, dogma, principle: that is the fundamental thing in human life. And this thing is spiritual; it is not organic, not natural. The biologist cannot say, Out of this tissue it grew. The neurologist cannot lay it bare. It is altogether spiritual, and is common to everyone. It is a meaning of that line in Genesis: *And God made man*. . . Dogma is basic to both the human dignity, and the human heroism. It makes man moral. In the Christian, by the grace of God in Christ, it becomes the Christian dogma, the precious *Beginself* of our elders.

Does it solve all the difficulties thus to affirm the dogmatic basis of life? No, it does not. The theologians, the philosophers, have wrestled long, will wrestle longer with the problems such an affirmation raises. And they will work fruitfully, if they proceed from principle, and acknowledge that they do. To reaffirm the dogmatic basis of life is not to solve all the difficulties of faith

and life. It is, however, to confront the right ones.

"Dogma" and "dogmatic" in dispute, *dogmatics* threatens to follow. For some of us, even, it stands for little more than a big book full of catalogued doctrines. Well, the life of dogmatics is dogma, and the life of principles is principle. Cut off from its root in dogma, dogmatics can become as unpropitious, unheroic as the liberal's "ideologies." Against that word too we should be on guard. It tends to take the faith out of philosophy; there is something wrong with the dogma underlying its rise to currency. When a man's dogma become ideology, his religion becomes something he can stand outside of, and be spectator to. In the end he finds himself judging it by something he calls "free scientific inquiry." We do better to acknowledge the moral rooting, the foundation in belief, the dogma. It is the religion in the thought behind the action. Our lives issue, as our elders said, *uit beginsel*, out of dogma.

Now take another look at liberalism. It filters in subtly, and when it comes, it

wastes the Christian heroism. Dogma is to the liberal what is wrong with people, what is wrong with the world. His quarrel is not with a particular kind of dogma; his quarrel is with any kind of it. The fear of it is for him the beginning of wisdom. Belief, if it is to have place at all, is to come only after the inquiry, not before. He maintains that his thought is not religiously founded, faith informed, moral. By the "free" of his free scientific inquiry he means unenslaved by dogma. So he substitutes a technique for a faith and a philosophy. This is a far cry from the evidence of things not seem. It is the plain acceptance of experiments proved.

In the long run, however, the liberal's effort at evading dogma is as futile as it is ill-disguised. He too is a man committed to religious decision, and he makes this decision. A dogma underneath the reason, a faith that informs it, is active in Pagan, liberal, Catholic, and fundamental Protestant alike. There is no such thing as irreligion. There is false religion, and retired reli-

gion. But irreligion? No! The liberal has his basic allegiance. It is as absolute as the Communist's, as active as the Catholic's. His refusal to say by what dogma he professes what he professes is a ruse. His crusade against dogma emerges from dogma. His neutrality is a pose. Watch him in crisis. He bristles like other authoritarians at what is opposed to his vindicating creed. In the end he will name his god, and but for the restraining grace — quite different from the liberal tolerance — oppose heroism to heroism.

The liberal gives out his manifestoes, voices his witness, and so do we. In a time when some of the principles for which we stand appear to be the same as those for which the liberal stands, we shall have to inquire into the underlying dogma. It is only in that area that we can determine of what principle the principles are expressive. This is the hard work of trying the spirits to see whether they be of God. This is the hard dogmatic work of living out of principle, *uit beginsel leven*.

Diamond Jubilee: 1876-1951

THE YEAR 1951 is one of historic moment for the Christian Reformed Church. It is the year in which the 75th Anniversary of the beginning of what is now Calvin College and Seminary will be celebrated. There were beginnings before this beginning. But the beginning which is now being brought into focus is that which found the Rev. Geert E. Boer taking upon himself the duties of "Professor" (Docent) in the newly appointed Theological School of the Christian Reformed Church of America.

That Theological School had a course of study which covered all branches of human learning thought needful to prepare men for the Christian Reformed ministry. It was virtually an extensive educational system in embryo. Out of it grew, alongside the Theological School, a "Literary Department," a Preparatory School, a Junior College, a full Liberal Arts College. Many of us would hope that the historian of a not too distant date would be able to add: "and a Calvinistic University."

The celebrations of beginning and growth will take place in the "founding week" of March 15 to March 21. As usual, Grand Rapids will get the "lion's

share." That is inevitable, since the greatest share of the lion is found there and in its environs.

There are two great events that will highlight the "founding week." The first is the Seminary *Dies Natalis* banquet.

Dies Natalis means "day of birth." The day of birth of the Theological School was March 15, 1876. March 15 is, therefore, the great day of Seminary celebration; and each year the Seminary student body and teaching staff observe it with the annual *Dies Natalis* banquet. But this is Jubilee Year, and its March 15 will be a big day. This year the *Dies Natalis* banquet will be held in grand style, and to it will be invited all Seminary graduates of the yesteryears who are able to come. Professor Louis Berkhof, our venerated President-Emeritus, will establish setting with his presence and a few remarks. Dr. Samuel Volbeda, our Senior Professor, and now Seminary President, will give the main address. That will be a big day — of remembered mercies from God's hand, of new consecration to a charge which becomes weightier as the crisis of our world grows.

The second great event of "founding week" will be the presentation in Grand Rapids Civic Auditorium of an historical pageant depicting the birth and growth of Calvin College and Seminary. The pageant is entitled "A Tree of Life," and has been written by Dr. Henry Zylstra, Professor of English at Calvin, and one of the editors of this journal. The pageant is eminently worth the reading. It will be even more worth the hearing and seeing. Dr. Zylstra has succeeded in depicting the birth and growth of Calvin not only in its externals, but especially in its inner spirit. And as Calvin's son has written the pageant, Calvin's sons and daughters will produce and present it. Rev. Arnold Brink, Educational Secretary, is the producer, and Mrs. Melanie Batts the director. Edgar Boeve, is preparing the sets for staging, Jerry Strong, is in charge of lighting, and students of both college and seminary, including Thespians and the musical organizations of the school, are taking part. The presentation will be far more than entertainment. It will be a majestic sermon, setting forth Cal-

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DIAMOND JUBILEE

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vin as God's gift and God's claim — "for of Him and unto Him."

We trust the celebration will not be merely local — nor will it be. Some enterprising Alumni groups are making preparations for the presentations of the pageant in their own areas. Even more significant is the fact that our churches — and who can think of Calvin apart from our churches and our people? — will observe Diamond Jubilee with a special Sunday service of Thanksgiving.

There is one thing which I hope we shall all remember. Jubilee Year is a year, not a week. It will not do to try to put all the jubilee into one week, and then be done. Nor will we try to do it. The Calvin Alumni Association is of the mind to make of its annual Alumni

banquet, traditionally held in June, a Jubilee Banquet. No doubt the Calvin Commencement exercises of 1951 will sound a Jubilee note and have its Jubilee Associations. And in its own way *The Reformed Journal*, mindful of Jubilee Year, will take occasion to reflect on Calvin's past in issues to come. This is the year, the 75th year, of God's call, His blessing, and of our response to it, in matters of higher education.

GEORGE STOB

SELF-EXAMINATION
EXPANDED

(Continued from page 5)

placing our confidence in the righteousness which is of the law. If a Church does not give free play to the principle of self-examination, she empties herself

of the spirit of the Reformation. And that is to return to a self-exaltation of the Church over the Word. It is a turning of the face back toward Rome, and toward that Jerusalem that was destroyed by God's judgment because she was closed to the judgment of the Word.

A Reformed church cannot stand still. To remain Reformed she must be constantly in the process of conforming herself to the demands of the Word. She must be constantly looking for defect and weakness, constantly making amends. To arrest the process at some point, is at that point to cease to be Reformed. To maintain that the Church is beyond the need of change, and that her theology has spoken the last word, is indeed to be comfortable. But it is also to cease to be a Church and to have a theology of the Word. To be constantly reforming is to be constantly in the process of self-examination. If a Church is unwilling to endure a criticism of biblical origin, she has withdrawn from that suffering and anxiety in which the salvation of the Church alone takes place.

When a Church, in the interest of being "safe" and "preserving the peace," justifies herself and her practice, she has ceased to believe in justification by faith and salvation by grace alone. At the point of her self-justification, she is, ethically speaking, identifying herself in Romish fashion with that perfectionism which is the kingdom of God. Such a Church, while still in sinful history, prematurely makes the claim to have transcended history and to be at rest. Such a Church will indeed enjoy a non-historical, out-of-this-world peace and rest. But it will be the peace and rest of the graveyard.

The spirit of the Reformation demands that we humbly admit that self-examination is always in order, that the need of revision is always possible. Nothing human, nothing Christian, is exempt from biblical assessment. Even our criticisms must be assessed by the Bible. When this is recognized in love, it will produce in the individual and in the Church a humility that is willing to disown its own works and claim salvation by grace. For the openness demanded by the spirit of the Protestant Reformation is an openness through which will come not only the judgment, but also the blessing, of the Word of God.

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For a most encouraging response to our announcement of this new journal!

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